

Greening NIH Laboratories by Recycling Empty Chemical Bottles

Did you know that your empty glass, aluminum, and plastic chemical bottles can be recycled? This includes all containers that previously contained chemicals (liquid or solid), buffer, saline solutions, and other miscellaneous products. These bottles can be collected for recycling by contacting the NIH Chemical Waste Services (CWS) Contractor at (301) 496-4710. The CWS Contractor can also deliver plastic totes that you can use to accumulate your empty bottles. All empty bottles and totes are to be stored inside the labs, not in the aisles or in hallways. Empty containers that previously contained infectious or radioactive material will not be accepted and should be disposed according to the [NIH Waste Disposal Guide](#).

Do not place empty chemical containers in commingled recycling bins, trash cans or bins labeled "Disposable Labware & Broken Glass." Do not place any empty soda cans, juice bottles, or water bottles in these totes. And do not transfer empty chemical bottles or chemical wastes from one lab to another lab designated as accumulation site.

The NIH, along with all other federal agencies, is required to recycle at least 50% of all solid waste by 2015. Recycling empty laboratory bottles is a great way to green our laboratory operations and help us reach the 50% recycling goal. It also reduces greenhouse gas emissions and provides cost savings to NIH CWS disposal services.

Year (CY)	Amount Diverted (Pounds)	Cost Avoidance Savings (\$)
2008	6257	\$7,149.00
2009	7588	\$9,100.00
2010	10290	\$11,821.00
2011	13588	\$14,267.00
2012	14611	\$15,342.00
2013	14234	\$14,946.00
TOTAL	66568	\$72,625.00

All of the NIH Institutes/Centers (ICs) have created Green Teams: [IC Green Teams Directory](#). Contact the ORF Division of Environmental Protection (DEP) at (301) 496-7990 if you have any questions about this recycling program.

Four sizes of totes available for collection of empty chemical bottles which can perfectly occupy the limited storage space in laboratories:

Largest size tote is the rectangular 30 gallon capacity with dimensions of 25"Lx20"Wx14"H and weighs 12.3 pounds.



Medium size tote is the green rectangular 20 gallon capacity with dimensions of 19"Lx16"Wx15.5"H. It weighs 3.95 pounds and is made of HDPE with 100% post-consumer recycled content.



Small gray rectangular tote has a 17 gallon capacity with dimensions of 19.5"Lx15.5"W x13"H and weighs 4.2 pounds.



Small green upright tote has a capacity of 14 gallons and dimensions of 15.25"Lx11"Wx19.9"H. This tote weighs 2.93 pounds and is made of HDPE with 100% post-consumer recycled content.

